

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WAHSDC 3554

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 3108

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH-NIGERIAN RELATIONS AFTER POMPIDOU

REF: LAGOS A-40, FEBRUARY 28, 1974

SUMMARY: BOTH FRENCH AND NIGERIANS APPEAR ANXIOUS TO
INSURE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN
FMG AND POST-POMPIDOU GOF. END SUMMARY

1. TWO WEEKS SINCE DEATH OF POMPIDOU HAVE SEEN
EXTENSIVE NIGERIAN PRESS COMMENTARY ON LATE
PRESIDENT'S LIFE AND POLICIES, NOT ALWAYS IN
FLATTERING TERMS. WHILE POMPIDOU GIVEN HIGH MARKS
BY SOME WRITERS FOR INTRODUCING GREATER PRAGMATISM INTO
FRENCH POLICY THAN WAS PERMITTED BY DE GAULLE, MOST WERE
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HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HIS APPROACH TO AFRICAN AFFAIRS.

FRANCE UNDER POMPIDOU CHARGED, INTER ALIA, WITH "PATERNALISM" AND NEO-COLONIALISM" IN RELATIONS WITH FORMER COLONIES; SUPPORTING SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIMES THROUGH ARMS SALES, INVESTMENTS, AND TRADE; AND GENERALLY FAILING BE RESPONSIVE TO CONCERNS OF INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES.

2. DESPITE OVERALL CRITICAL TONE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS, HOWEVER, SEVERAL COMMENTATORS SPECIFICALLY CREDITED POMPIDOU WITH BRINGING ABOUT RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN FRENCH NIGERIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. ONE PAPER FLATLY CHARACTERIZED THESE AS BEING BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE SINCE NIGERIAN INDEPENDENCE, AND HOSTILE TONE USED TO DESCRIBE GOF POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA WAS NOWHERE APPLIED TO CURRENT FMG-GOF TIES.

3. FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCES REPORT THAT FRENCH AMBASSADOR ROGER RECEIVED VERBAL APOLOGY FROM COMMISSIONER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ARIKPO FOR HARSH TONE OF NEWSPAPER REMARKS ABOUT POMPIDOU, WHICH ARIKPO SAID IN NO WAY REPRESENTED VIEWS OF FMG. AS FURTHER MARK OF CONSIDERATION, ROGER RECEIVED PERSONAL NOTE OF CONDOLENCE FROM GOWON IN ADDITION TO FORMAL NOTE SENT THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS AND SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISHED BY FMG. ARIKPO, WHO REPRESENTED FMG AT POMPIDOU MEMORIAL SERVICE, ALSO MADE CLEAR HIS HOPE THAT HIS PROPOSED MID-PARIL VISIT TO FRANCE (REFAIR) CAN BE RESCHEDULED AT CONVENIENT TIME FOLLOWING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND FORMATION OF NEW GOF. FRENCH HAD PLANNED ELABORATE PROGRAM FOR ARIKPO VISIT, INCLUDING CALLS ON PRESIDENT AND NUMBER OF MINISTERS, AND EXPECT THAT SIMILAR SHCEDULE WILL BE LAID ON WHEN NEW TIME SET FOR TRIP.

4. COMMENT: BOTH FRENCH AND NIGERIANS CLEARLY ATTACH INCREASING IMPORTANCE TO THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND BOTH SIDES APPEAR ANXIOUS TO INSURE THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE FOLLOWING INSTALLATION OF POST-POMPIDOU GOF. EXTENT OF NIGERIAN PRESS COMMENTARIES ON LATE PRESIDENT IS TACIT ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RANCE'S IMPORTANCE TO NIGERIA (ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO FRENCH ROLE IN PROMOTING OR HINDERING WEST AFRICAN INTEGRATION), THOUGH CRITICAL TONE
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DEMONSTRATES THAT UNDERLYING SUSPICION OF FRENCH MOTIVES AND CONCERN LEST FMG BE "TAKEN" IN DEALING WITH GOF ARE STILL PRESENT. ADDITIONAL ELEMENT CONTRIBUTING TO FMG INTEREST IN FRANCE MAY WELL BE FASCINATION WITH GOF INDEPENDENCE VIS-A-VIS US AND EVEN OTHER ERUOEPEAN NATIONS, CHARACTERISTIC WHICH WAS CITED ADMIRINGLY BY SEVERAL COMMENTATORS AND WHICH CLEARLY REFLECTS WAY NIGERIANS VISUALIZE THEIR OWN POSTURE ON WORLD STAGE.

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